

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 NSC-05 INR-05 CIAE-00
PRS-01 SP-02 NSAE-00 PM-03 DODE-00 IO-06 SSM-01
/053 W

-----053016 051022Z /12

R 050825Z OCT 77
FM USINT BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5084
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BAGHDAD 1761

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IZ
SUBJECT: STRAINS BETWEEN GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ AND BAATH
PARTY NATIONAL COMMAND

REF: (A) DAMASCUS 6127 (NOTAL), (B) BAGHDAD 1370 (NOTAL),
(C) BAGHDAD 1004 (NOTAL), (D) BAGHDAD 1753 (NOTAL).

1. SUMMARY: SADDAM HUSSEIN HAS TAKEN ENERGETIC
MOVES TO RESTRICT MEMBERS OF THE BAATH PARTY NATIONAL
COMMAND (BPNC) TO AN IDEOLOGICAL AND INSPIRATIONAL
ROLE. AT LEAST TWO BPNC MEMBERS ARE UNDER HOUSE
ARREST, AND BPNC AS A WHOLE HAS LOST RESIDUAL ROLES
AS A POLICYMAKING AND OPERATIONAL BODY. STEPS MAY
FREE HUSSEIN'S HAND TO SEEK RAPPROCHEMENT WITH SYRIA
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AND GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN GENERAL.
END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING TO REPORTS FROM FOREIGN DIPLOMATS
AND FROM USUALLY RELIABLE SOURCE WITH CLOSE LINKS
TO IRAQI INTELLIGENCE, IRAQI STRONGMAN SADDAM
HUSSEIN HAS SHARPLY CURTAILED ROLE OF BPNC BY

SERIES OF ENERGETIC ACTIONS DURING LAST WEEK IN SEPTEMBER. SPECIFICALLY, HE HAS STOPPED TURNING NO-STRINGS OPERATIONAL FUNDS OVER TO THE NATIONAL COMMAND. WHEREAS BPNC HAD PREVIOUSLY KEPT SUCH FUNDS IN SWISS BANKS, THEY ARE NOW REQUIRED TO KEEP CURRENT ACCOUNTS IN IRAQI BANKS WHERE REGIME CAN MONITOR THEIR DISBURSEMENT. HUSSEIN HAS ORDERED AN END TO EFFORTS BY BPNC TO INFLUENCE IRAQI FOREIGN POLICY THROUGH CLANDESTINE OPERATIONS IN OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES AND THROUGH CONTACTS WITH FOREIGN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. HE HAS ALSO LAID DOWN REQUIREMENT THAT IDEOLOGICAL STATEMENTS MUST BE CLEARED BY THE BAATH PARTY REGIONAL COMMAND OF IRAQ FOR AS LONG AS IT IS THE ONLY SUBSIDIARY OF NATIONAL COMMAND WHICH IS ACTUALLY IN POWER.

3. IRAQI AUTHORITIES HAVE REPORTEDLY PLACED ZAYD HAYDAR, THIRD RANKING BPNC MEMBER, UNDER HOUSE ARREST. THIS ACTION, PROTESTED BY BALANCE OF BPNC, RESULTED FROM EFFORTS BY HAYDAR TO ASSERT HIS PREROGATIVES AS CHIEF OF THE BPNC FOREIGN AFFAIRS BUREAU. AN ADDITIONAL COUNT AGAINST HAYDAR HAS BEEN HIS INSISTENCE THAT HE OUTRANKS HUSSEIN IN BAATH PARTY PROTOCOL. IRAQI INTELLIGENCE AUTHORITIES HAVE ALSO ATTACHED ALL VEHICLES OF THE NATIONAL COMMAND AND REPLACED PERSONAL GUARDS OF CONFIDENTIAL

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BPNC MEMBERS. LATTER ACTION LED TO A BRIEF SHOOTING FRAY NIGHT OF SEPT 29 WITH GUARDS OF BPNC MEMBER ELIAS FARAH. OTHER NATIONAL COMMAND MEMBERS UNDER A CLOUD ARE QASIM SALLAM (STILL IN U.S. ON VACATION), ABDUL MAJID RAFEI (JUST APPLIED FOR U.S. VISA PER REF D) AND ALI GHANNAM. SALLAM MAY BEAR ONUS FOR PAST INCIDENTS OF BPNC ADVENTURISM IN DEALING WITH THIRD WORLD, WHILE RAFEI WAS A MAJOR ARCHITECT OF IRAQ'S BANKRUPT POLICY IN LEBANON. GHANNAM HAS BEEN COOPERATIVE WITH SADDAM HUSSEIN BUT IS IN A PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE POSITION AS HEAD OF BPNC PALESTINIAN AND ARMED STRUGGLE BUREAU.

4. BPNC SECRETARY GENERAL MICHEL AFLAQ HAS NOW BEEN OUTSIDE IRAQ FOR AT LEAST THREE MONTHS. HE IS REPORTEDLY UNDER MEDICAL CARE IN SOUTHERN FRANCE, BUT SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THE "FOUNDER LEADER" IS PROLONGING HIS STAY TO UNDERLINE HIS DISPLEASURE WITH DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAQ. SHIBLI AYSAMI, BPNC DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL, REMAINS AS THE LAST PRESTIGIOUS SYRIAN RESIDING

IN BAGHDAD AND MAINTAINING TOLERABLE RELATIONS
WITH HUSSEIN. THE LATTER WILL NOT WANT TO LOSE
THE GLOSS OF PARTY LEGITIMACY WHICH AYSAMI CAN
PROVIDE, AND AYSAMI IS WISELY PLAYING HIS CARDS
MORE CAUTIOUSLY THAN THE PROUD AND STUBBORN ZAYD
MAYDAR. SPECULATION NOW CENTERS ON POSSIBILITY
THAT HUSSEIN WILL PUSH FOR INCLUSION OF NEW
MEMBERS IN THE BPNC, BOTH TO DILUTE THE PREDOMINANCE
OF SYRIAN EMIGRES AND TO INSTALL MEN PERSONALLY
LOYAL TO HUSSEIN.

5. WHATEVER PROMPTED HUSSEIN TO MOVE AT THIS TIME,
IT APPEARS THAT HE LAID CAREFUL PLANS. HIS SENIOR
ALLY ON THE RCC AND REGIONAL COMMAND, IZZAT DURI,
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DID NOT ATTEND THE RECENT CAIRO CONFERENCE OF ARAB
LEAGUE INTERIOR MINISTERS. INTELLIGENCE AND
SECURITY FORCES WERE ON GENERAL ALERT ON THE CRUCIAL
NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER 29, WHEN THE BPNC MEMBERS LOST

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BAGHDAD 1761

LIMDIS

THEIR VEHICLES AND PERSONAL BODYGUARDS.

6. COMMENT: DURING THE PAST NINE MONTHS, HUSSEIN HAS BEEN REMOVING OR NEUTRALIZING IRAQI RIVALS WHILE BUILDING HIS BASE OF SUPPORT WITHIN THE PARTY AND BUREAUCRACY BY ADVANCING HANDPICKED MEN INTO KEY POSITION. PRESIDENT BAKR, HUSSEIN CAN RECKON, WILL SOON PASS FROM THE SCENE BY NATURAL CAUSES, AND NO OTHER IRAQI HAS THE STATURE TO LEAD DISAFFECTED ELEMENTS WITHIN THE ARMY WHO MIGHT JOIN THEIR CAUSE WITH PARTY HARDLINERS. BUT THE NATIONAL COMMAND HAS BEEN A POTENTIAL RALLYING POINT FOR THE PARTY IDEOLOGUES WHO, WITH THE IRAQI COMMUNISTS, PRESS HARD ON HUSSEIN'S FLANK (REF B). THE BPNC HAS ALSO EMBARRASSED THE IRAQI STATE MORE
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THAN ONCE WITH ARAB NEIGHBORS AND OTHER FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS. MOST IMPORTANTLY, AT A TIME WHEN IRAQ IS TRYING TO PLAY A MORE FRUITFUL ROLE IN THE ARAB DIPLOMATIC SPHERE, THE BPNC IS ADAMANTLY OPPOSED TO ANY RECONCILIATION WITH THE "RENEGADE SYRIAN REGIME." ALTHOUGH HUSSEIN HAS NOT, TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, MADE A SIGNIFICANT RESPONSE TO THE OVERTURES OF HAFEZ ASSAD (REF A) HE MUST BE GIVING SOME THOUGHT TO THE INCREASE IN IRAQI INFLUENCE AND LEVERAGE WITHIN THE ARAB WORLD WHICH WOULD FLOW FROM A MORE POSITIVE POLICY TOWARD SYRIA. IRAQ STANDS TO LOSE LITTLE BEYOND SOME OF THE LESS REPUTABLE AND LESS POTENT HANGERS-ON WITHIN THE REJECTION FRONT.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE U.S.: ONE PROBABLE CAUSE OF DISCONTENT WITHIN THE BPNC OVER HUSSEIN'S POLICIES HAS BEEN HIS FOCUS ON IMPROVING IRAQ'S RELATIONS WITH WESTERN INDUSTRIALIZED (READ "CAPITALIST") STATES. HE STILL HESITATES TO TAKE THE GIANT STEP OF RESUMING RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., BUT THE BPNC HAS BEEN AWARE OF THE CONSIDERATION BEING GIVEN TO THIS DEPARTURE (REF C) AND HAS ALMOST CERTAINLY BEEN ELOQUENT IN ITS OPPOSITION. CURTAILMENT OF THE BPNC'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS FUNCTIONS WILL AT LEAST PROVIDE HUSSEIN WITH MORE ELBOW ROOM AS HE MANEUVERS IRAQ OUT OF ITS SELF-IMPOSED ISOLATION. IF HUSSEIN SUCCEEDS TOO WELL, HOWEVER, HE MIGHT EXERT A HARDLINE INFLUENCE ON SYRIA AND

OTHER ARAB STATES WHICH, DURING THE SHORTRUN, WOULD
OUTWEIGH THE BENEFITS OF A GRADUAL SOFTENING OF
IRAQ'S REJECTIONIST AND ANTI-AMERICAN POSITIONS.

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